Gender Implications of Climate Change in Humanitarian Action
Review of 2008 Flash Appeals for Inclusion of Gender Issues

Introduction

It is commonly agreed that climate change is unequivocal and is already modifying patterns of extreme weather such as flooding, cyclones and droughts. Destructive heavy precipitation events, intense tropical storms and greater unpredictability are likely to increase as a result of climate change. Currently, nine out of ten disasters recorded are climate related.

Why gender mainstreaming?

Natural disasters and sudden environmental changes have a disproportionately negative impact on vulnerable communities and groups. They may also magnify existing gender inequalities and affect gender roles, which need to be taken into consideration both in terms of disaster preparedness and response.

2008 Analysis of Flash Appeals

Six Flash Appeals from 2008 have been reviewed in preparation of this briefing note. They include all Flash Appeals related to climate-induced disasters which were submitted in 2008: Bolivia (extreme climate events as a result of the climate phenomenon known as La Niña); Haiti (hurricanes); Honduras (heavy rainfall); Madagascar (cyclones); Myanmar (cyclone Nargis) and Tajikistan (extremely cold winters).

Although there is a general lack of gender perspective in the Flash Appeals reviewed here, some provide good examples in terms of gender equality programming, such as the Haiti[*] and Myanmar Appeals.

Use of sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD):
To disaggregate data by sex and age is important so that field staff and donors can design their assistance plans by taking into account different needs. Interventions need to be developed bearing in mind the type of beneficiaries they are addressed to; projects will be shaped differently depending on whether the beneficiaries are women, girls, boys or men.

It needs to be acknowledged that extensive statistics and needs assessments may not be available when a Flash Appeal is launched. However, none of the Appeals reviewed here demonstrates to compensate for the initial lack of sex- and age-disaggregated data with the commitment to collect such data at a later stage.

Among the six Appeals reviewed here, Haiti is the only one that breaks down the affected population by sex: "Preliminary information indicates that an estimated 800,000 people have been affected by the disasters, 52 percent of whom are women and 36 percent children." (p. 15). Yet this data is not given as much attention as it should: suffice it to mention that it appears only in section seven of chapter three, which covers health.

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[*] The Appeals process in Haiti seems to have had a strong participation by agencies traditionally working with gender-related issues, such as UNIFEM and UNFPA. This is reflected in general throughout the Appeal, but also on a more specific note in clusters where these agencies seem to be particular active, such as early recovery and protection.

It is recommended, instead, that this data be mentioned earlier in the Appeal, since it needs to be considered at an early stage to shape a gender-sensitive response to the emergency.

It is also worth noting that the Haiti Appeal produces some gender-related statistics in relation to the protection sector.

27 (15 percent) of the 181 projects outlined in the Flash Appeals disaggregate beneficiaries by sex and age. The Myanmar Appeal uses SADD in the most consistent manner, notably in the following clusters: wat/san, health, shelter, food, nutrition, agriculture and protection. It is also worth mentioning that most of the projects presented by the health cluster in Bolivia (seven out of nine projects) use SADD.

Gender equality programming
As stated by ERC John Holmes in a letter to Humanitarian Coordinators in April 2007, "effective humanitarian response addresses the needs and concerns of all groups in an affected population. This means understanding how conflicts and disasters affect women, men, boys and girls differently and basing programming on their differential needs and capacities. This is what gender equality programming is all about."

All Appeals do reflect some gender equality in their programming. Both Honduras and Haiti state on a general note that "efforts will be made to support the participation of key stakeholders and facilitate the mainstreaming of critical issues such as gender", and particularly the Haiti Appeal stresses the need for a gender-sensitive approach and the promotion of women's rights throughout the text. Myanmar has incorporated generic ToRs for clusters lead into its Appeal, which include gender-sensitive programming and gender equality. In Madagascar one output reads: "Coordination, information management and facilitation of early recovery programmes are gender sensitive." (p. 7). Although mentioned in the Appeals, these references to gender equality programming are too generic not well reflected in the actual projects.

Nonetheless, there are some good examples too. The best one is arguably found in the protection cluster in Myanmar, which will provide for the distribution of dignity kits to women, girls, boys and men. This project not only exemplifies a good practice in gender equality programming but also shows a good practice to prevent GBV.

In this respect, Honduras is also worth mentioning: the food distribution and health clusters will give special attention to pregnant and nursing women, and one project of the early recovery cluster will specifically benefit women as entrepreneurs.

Prevention and response to gender-based violence
Sudden-onset disasters increase the risk of gender-based violence for a number of reasons. Good programming takes these risks into account; all clusters have a responsibility to plan for prevention of and response to GBV.

Most Appeals, with the exception of Tajikistan, identify risks for gender-based violence. However, only 2 out of 181 projects are directly linked to GBV (one in Haiti and one in Myanmar). Both identify women and children as beneficiaries and will be carried out by the protection clusters in the respective countries.

It is worth mentioning that the shelter cluster in the Haiti Appeal plans to provide separate sanitation facilities for women and girls, which is considered a good initiative to prevent GBV. The protection cluster in Myanmar will be responsible for mainstreaming GBV and gender in other clusters.

Participation
In general, promotion of stakeholder participation can be improved in the revised Appeals. Haiti and Honduras have included a generic clause: "Efforts will be made to support the participation of key stakeholders and facilitate the mainstreaming of critical issues such as gender." (p. 26 Honduras; p. 27 Haiti).

In addition, the early recovery cluster in Haiti will coordinate activities with women's NGOs and the Ministry of Women, as well as develop and use gender-sensitive indicators.

Recommendations:

It is important to point out that, due to the nature of a Flash Appeal, information may be limited when the Appeal is first launched. However, a gender analysis should be provided to the extent possible. The Appeal should also inform that missing information will be presented in the revised edition so that a complete analysis of the disaster's impact on women, girls, boys and men can be provided.

Sex-and age-disaggregated data
- The affected population should be identified by sex and age when this data is available. This is information is crucial when efficient interventions are to be planned.
- Beneficiaries of each project should be disaggregated by sex and age, in order to demonstrate which population groups benefit from the project.

Gender-based violence
- Prevent and respond to gender-based violence is the responsibility of all clusters and relevant actions should be included in project planning. A good example is the shelter/NFI cluster in Haiti, which has included a project on establishing separate sanitary systems for women and girls.
- The overall responsibility of GBV programming as a cross-cutting issue can be placed with a specific cluster, as is the case with the protection cluster in Myanmar.

Participation
- Affected communities should be included in the planning process. It is particularly important to consult with all affected groups, including women.

Gender considerations in a Flash Appeal:

- Who is affected?
  The affected population should be identified and disaggregated by sex and age group (women, men, girls, boys, elderly women and elderly men). This is key since it determines what kind of assistance is needed.

  One good example can be found in the Haiti appeal:
  "Preliminary information indicates that an estimated 800,000 people have been affected by the disasters, 52 percent of whom are women and 36 percent children." (p. 15)

- How are they affected?
  An outline describing how the different groups have been affected should be provided. Again, this is necessary to target humanitarian assistance to the specific needs of different affected groups.

  One good example can be found in the Haiti appeal:
  "151,072 people are currently estimated to be housed in temporary shelters throughout the country, including a significant proportion of female-headed households which remain vulnerable to exacerbated insecurity and deepened poverty." (p. 3)

- Who needs protection and how?
  It is necessary to outline potential risks and include a risk response not only in the Appeals but also in project proposals. Protection is a cross-cutting issue and measures should be applied by all clusters.

Checklist for a gender-friendly Flash Appeal:

- Collect and use sex- and age-disaggregated data.
- If SADD is not obtainable at the moment of submission, plan for the data to be collected at a later stage and mention this in the Appeal.
- Disaggregate project beneficiaries by sex and age.
- Ensure stakeholder participation, with emphasis on gender equality.
- Use gender-specific indicators.
- Take appropriate action to prevent and respond to GBV.